1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
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"Ise quainted wid two ole men, one call Uncle Friday, duh othuh Uncle July," was the statement of a third Brownville resident.* "One wuz bawn on Good Friday an duh othuh on duh Foth uh July." [20]

We learned that certain foods are viewed with suspicion and are never eaten or allowed to be brought into the house.[65] The exact reason why these foods are forbidden was not explained to us. One woman said, "One ting I do lak is peanuts, but I dohn eat um. An I dohn let nobody else eat um in muh house. I dohn know jis wy, but it bring bad luck all duh week." **

The palmetto tree, Robert McNichols † told us, supplies an edible substance in the form of palmetto cabbage taken from the center of the tree, about a foot below the top. This is the terminal bud of the tree, white in color, tender, and resembling the ordinary northern cabbage. It may be eaten cooked or uncooked.[45a]

From the same tree a wine is made. We learned two different recipes for the preparation of this beverage. The wine is sometimes made from the cabbage, which when first cut contains a white sap. The chopped cabbage is put in a container where it is allowed to ferment, after which it is strained and sugar added.‡[45b] The wine may also be made from the dark blue palmetto berries. These are placed in a container until fermentation occurs after which the juice is extracted and sweetened. The wine is a clear dark brown and is said to have an excellent flavor. Incidentally, the palmetto tree serves a variety of other purposes. Palmetto fibre is used in making baskets, rugs, bottle holders, and numerous other objects.[45]

Many of the Brownville residents are skilled in palmetto weaving and also in woodcarving. Walking sticks (Plate

* *William Mikell, 616 West 32nd Street.*
** *Beatrice Ward, 832 West 35th Street.*
† *Robert McNichols, Brownville.*
‡ *Ibid.*

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suh, wid dat buzzud deah duh jedge jis couldn do nuttn. He jis had tuh pick up an go. Duh case wuz dismissed."

"Tell bout wut Smaht McCall done tuh Doctuh Rogers," requested Uncle Jack.

"Well, Doctuh Rogers, he wuz a regluh doctuh an sometime duh folks would go tuh see um wen dey git sick stead ub goin tuh Smaht McCall. Smaht, he git mad. He say he fix dis Doctuh Rogers. He put a spell on duh hawse. Wen Doctuh Rogers go out nex time an git in he carriage, duh hawse run right intuh a tree an Doctuh Rogers git kill." [15]

As an afterthought he finished with, "Sometime deze root doctuhs is smahtuhn duh regluh doctuhs. Long time ago a doctuh tell me I hab tuh stop eatin meat. He say it ain good fuh me an ef uh eat it, I git sickn die. I bin eatin it ebuh sence an Ise still alibe. Dat doctuh bin dead fuh yeahs. Mos deze root doctuhs knows plenty; dey know nuff tuh lib."

There were a number of palmetto trees in the section and we asked if any of the people had ever heard of eating palmetto cabbage.

"Yes'm," they answered.

"Palmettuh cabbages is good eatin."

"Yuh kin jis cut it up an eat it raw an yuh kin cook it up wid fat meat," Uncle Robert told us.

"Yuh kin make good palm wine outuh duh berries," volunteered Peter McQueen.[43]

Various members of the party asked Peter McQueen to tell one of the numerous stories about Brer Rabbit and Brer Wolf. Peter pondered for a minute; then he started:

"Bruh Rabbit and Bruh Wolf wuz alluz tryin tuh git duh bes uh one anudduh. Now Bruh Wolf he own a hoe an it wuk fuh crop all by itsef.[39] Bruh Wolf jis say, 'Swish,' tuh it. Den he sit down in duh fiel an duh hoe do all duh wuk.

"Bruh Rabbit he wahn dat hoe. He hide behine bush an watch how duh wolf make it wuk. One day wen duh wolf

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
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538 subtropical location, one can find men, women, and children sitting in
517 kitchens smelling the welcome aroma of "hoppin John and bone" cooking in a pot or just sitting, smoking pipes (men and women smoke pipes on the Sea Islands), and watching the torrential rain beat against the windowpanes. The best stories I collected on the Sea Islands and in Africa, however, were ones I heard at night in front of the fireplaces when all the daily tasks were completed, supper had been served, the children had been bathed, and everyone was relaxed, content, and gazing into the open fire. The fire had a hypnotic effect, and one's imagination could easily see forms amid the light and shadows of the flames while one listened to the teller unravel his tale.

(264) During the cold season on the Sea Islands (*harmattan* in Africa), yams (or *ji*, the Igbo name for a kind of potato) are often covered with the hot coals of the fire, baked, and offered as refreshments to the entertainer, who never seems to fail to make his tale more pleasing as a result. Gin, homemade brews, and other warming drinks are often passed around if there is a good group of tellers and listeners. In Igbo, Yoruba, and Ibebio villages fresh palm wine, chilled or served at room temperature, and cola nuts are always welcome refreshments during storytelling times.

538 Though everyone is potentially capable of telling a tale, I soon learned that not everyone can tell a *good* tale. Sea Island informants with whom I spent much time over several years often attempted to tell stories only in an effort to help me along with my work. Others felt a strong need to compensate me for coming such a long way to talk to them or to hear their stories. Thus they made efforts to tell tales even when the occasion was not conducive for a telling to begin. In this situation the teller was often tense, rushed, and unprepared to do his best; the tale would often be confused, lacking in plot, and generally uninteresting. But it is well known among the islanders and the Nigerians who the good storytellers are, and after some time I was directed to those tellers well known for their performances of the oral traditions and gifted in the oral technique. In the words of one of the islanders, "some people de gift for lie." The world *lie* has more than one denotation on the Sea Islands: it not only means that one is not telling the truth; it is also a term associated with any kind of fictional tale told primarily for entertainment.

538 There are certain cultural taboos associated with Sea Island story-
462 telling. More men than women tell tales. Men are expected to be

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X

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Nose, nose, jolly red nose.
What gave you that jolly red nose?
Nutmegs and cinnamon, spice an clo'es,
They give me this jolly red nose.

XI[22]

There was an old man
And he had a calf,
And that's half.
He took him out of the stall
And put him on the wall,
And that's all.

XII

Since that lady gave you that box,
You look like you are going to have the chicken-pox.

Since people walk on the street,
You are name the days of the week.

Since people don't always go to work on time,
I am writing rhymes.

Where are you going, Jack?
You look like you just come back.

Hello, Si.
You look like you going to cut some rye.

Where is my dog
I took for the frog
That was sitting on the log?

[22] This and the one following were written down and turned in by pupils in two of the Island schools. Apparently they are attempts at original rhymes.

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9. Don' take no mo' on yo' heels dan you can kick off wid yo' toes. 538
10. Feed you wid corn, choke you wid de cob.

TOASTS, RHYMES, AND GAMES

The young people know quite a few "toasts," play rhymes, game songs, and the like. Sometimes even an adult will respond to a request to "say a piece" at a party by giving a bit of child's verse. On one occasion a man recited in a formal manner a little piece beginning, 524 538 (539)

> My pretty pink, I really think
> That you and I should marry.

Some of the rhymes and games are very old, having been brought over by the English. Others are of recent origin and introduction. Some of the rhymes, for example, are survivals of ante-bellum minstrel verse, and a few are attempts at original verse. (177)

Toasts[20] 273 514 516 539

I

Some water I hol' in dis glass
Between my finger an' t'umb.
If I don' drink it all,
I lef' you some.

II

The rose is red
An' violets are blue,
Honey is sweet
An' so are you.

[20] For four other toasts, see Parsons, p. 176. For numerous American versions of children's games, rhymes, etc., see W. W. Newell, *Games and Songs of American Children*.

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III

Thou art my love, and I am thine,
I drew thee for my valentine.

IV

The glass is full of water
And the pail is full of wine,
The world is full of boys and girls,
But, honey, you are mine.

Other Verses

I

Some people have one coat,
T'ank God, I got two.
All de week I vear a ragged coat,
On Sunday my long-tail blue.

II

I went to de jail-house on my knees,
Firs' t'ing I saw was a pan o' peas.
Peas was red an' meat was fat—
Got stuck on de jail-house jus' fuh dat.

III

I went to de hen-house de odder night,
It was awful dark an' I had no light.
Only de roostah givin' out de hymn,
Givin' out de hymn fuh de hen o' prayah.
Did he preach it!

IV

'Possum on de 'simmon tree
A-winkin' down on me.
I pick up a stick, an' I was so shy,
I pop um across ol' 'possum's eye.

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V

'Possum on de 'simmon tree,
Sparrow on de groun';
'Possum t'row de 'simmon down,
Sparrow shake um 'roun'.

VI

Hawk an' buzza't went to law,
Hawk come back wid a broken jaw.

VII

When I been a little boy
I stayed by myself.
All de bread an' cheese I git,
I put um on de shelf.
De rat an' mice, I nevah see de like.
Rough shirt, standin' collah,
'Nough to make a niggah hollah.
Walk in, John, I'll be yo' frien',
I'm ridin' on a pickynut tree.

VIII[21]

I had a little pony,
His name was Dimple Gray.
I len' him to a lady,
She ride him miles away.
She whip him, she lash him,
She ride him t'rough de mire.
I wouldn' len' my pony 'g'in
Fo' all de lady hire.

IX

All of a row,
Bend a bow,
Shot at a pigeon
And killed a crow.

[21] Compare a similar rhyme, with tune, given by Parsons, p. 185.

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Where are you going, Mary?
You look so contrary.

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Play Rhymes and Games[23]

I

Eeny, meeny, miny, mo,
Ketch a neighbor by 'e toe,
If 'e holler, let 'im go.

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II

Ink stink, tobacco stink,
Ketch a neighbor by his toe,
If he holler, let 'im go.

III

Eeny, meeny, dilly, deany,
Hit um a lick an' John de guney.
Time, time, American time,
Eighteen hundred an' ninety-nine.

IV

Cod fish, cod fish,
How many cod fish do you wish?
Four spell four an' you're clean out
Wid yo' mudder dirty dish clot' in yo' mout'.

V

William, William, thrumble toe,
He's a good fisher man.
Ketches hen, put um in de pen.
Wi', bri', limber lock,
T'ree geese in a flock,
One flew eas', one flew wes',
One flew over de cuckoo nes'.
O-U-T spells *out*,
You ol' dirty dish rag, *you!*

[23] I-VII are counting-out rhymes. No. VIII is a hide-and-seek form.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
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will pay for it. The two days following Christmas day; the first Saturdays after finishing threshing, planting, hoeing, and harvest, are also to be holidays, on which the people may work for themselves. Only half task is to be done on every Saturday, except during planting and harvest, and [except by] those who have misbehaved or been lying up during the week."[44]

Most of their holidays the slaves spent "pleasuring themselves." Christmas was the great event of the year, for it was at this time that the master distributed rewards to his people as well as extra provisions of beef and molasses and "hands of tobacco." The master of at least one sea-island plantation also provided his slaves with "plenty of whiskey." At the end of the three-day orgy the Negroes were often "completely done up with eating, drinking, and dancing."[45]

A holiday was also the occasion for many requests to visit the island stores and neighboring plantations, but most planters discouraged inter-plantation visits and required the overseer and the drivers to check up frequently on the activities in the "street." An overseer was supposed to see that all was well in the quarters before he went to bed, and the drivers were also responsible for keeping the street quiet. It was by this means rather than by the patrol system that sea-island planters kept peace on their plantations at night, although occasionally the planters or their overseers joined in "riding a patrol." No slave was permitted either by law or by plantation regulation to be absent from home without a ticket. While some planters permitted every well behaved slave to have one whenever he requested it, others issued tickets more

[44] Phillips, *Plantation and Frontier*, I, 117.
[45] Hall, *Travels in North America*, II, 232.

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grades. The school was equipped with blackboards, charts, and maps, and in most cases provided the pupils with books and slates. After Miss Towne's death in 1901, Miss Murray carried on the work of the school until 1904 when Miss Rossa B. Cooley and Miss Grace B. House, teachers at Hampton Institute in Virginia, took over the work, and the curriculum was enlarged to include industrial and agricultural training similar to that offered by Hampton.

As in slavery the laborer had stopped work at noon Saturday and declared a holiday until Monday morning, so did the freedman. Saturday afternoon saw the island roads lined with pedestrians and carts, for each head of the family, regardless of where he lived, felt that he must pay a visit to "Corner Store" or even go to Beaufort. Saturday night was the time for general merriment, a dance for non-church members, a sing or a shout for those who were. Miss Towne complained in 1876 that on Frogmore plantation where she lived the people were beginning to have parties on other nights of the week as well. "Last night," she wrote, "our boys went to a party again, and to-day they are sleeping it out. We have issued the edict, 'No more parties this winter,' for there is arising among the Frogmore young men a constant desire for gayety,—suppers, etc., that we intend to begin to frown upon. They are flush just now, and are spending too much. They are all temperance parties, which is one good thing."[182]

Although there were occasions when people from all parts of the Island assembled together, as on Saturday afternoons at Corner Store, at church on Sunday mornings,

[182] *Letters and Diary*, p. 257.